


 splash!

quick facts on...

# Keeping the Canal Right-of-Way Clear

How you can help...

MAY 2009

## The South Florida Water Management District

is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

Our Mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.

## SAFETY FIRST!

Flood control in your neighborhood depends on well-maintained canals.

This requires that land adjacent to a canal embankment be clear of trees, shrubs, fences and other encroaching objects.

The South Florida Water Management District is committed to carrying out its flood control mission, and we need your help. We manage the primary drainage canal system in our region and maintain the associated lands and facilities. Those who live adjacent to District canals or connecting secondary canals often add enhancements to the canal right-of-way. But enhancements may ultimately end up as obstructions to proper drainage and interfere with emergency response.

## The Situation...

Our subtropical climate beckons us to enjoy the outdoors. Residents who live along a canal right-of-way often like to plant vegetation to enhance the view or set up play equipment or structures for entertaining. However, permitting for some right-of-way uses may be required, and violations to established setback requirements are growing. This can seriously hamper the District's ability to provide a well operating drainage system.

## The Importance of Proper Drainage

We live in a low, flat place and depend on our interconnected drainage system to remove excess water after tropical storms and hurricanes. Vegetation and structures along a canal right-of-way may ultimately end up in the canal and cause blockage around water control structures downstream. In turn, these obstructions will prevent water from properly draining and result in flooding that may endanger the health, safety, and welfare of residents in the immediate area and those many miles away.

During normal operations, field staff must have clear access to canals for routine

maintenance, repair, and debris removal. And during times of disaster and emergency recovery, access becomes even more important as recovery teams have to navigate through the canal system to perform emergency maintenance tasks.



*Trees planted too close to canals may end up as obstructions.*

## Right-of-Way Clearances

There are compatible uses of the District's maintenance right-of-way for homeowners. However, they are governed by Right-of-Way Permitting Rules. Some uses are exempt, while others are subject set back rules. For example, above-ground structures and plantings must be set back from the District right-of-way or easement. In some cases, structures have received a permit; however, they were not built according to submitted specifications. Examples of violations found on right-of-way property include:

- Trees and shrubbery
- Sheds
- Gazebos
- Fences and hedges
- Decks and patios
- Abandoned vehicles

**Florida's Water**  
It's Worth Saving



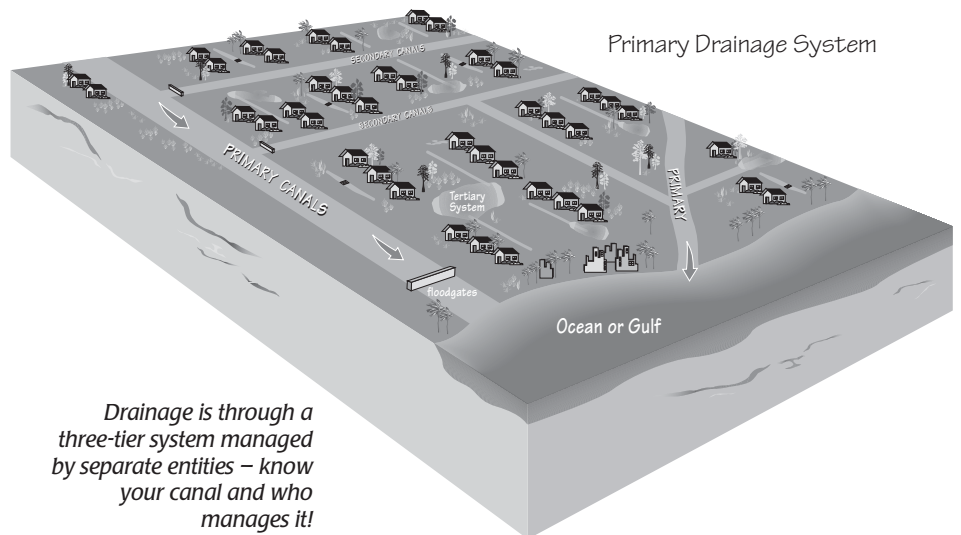
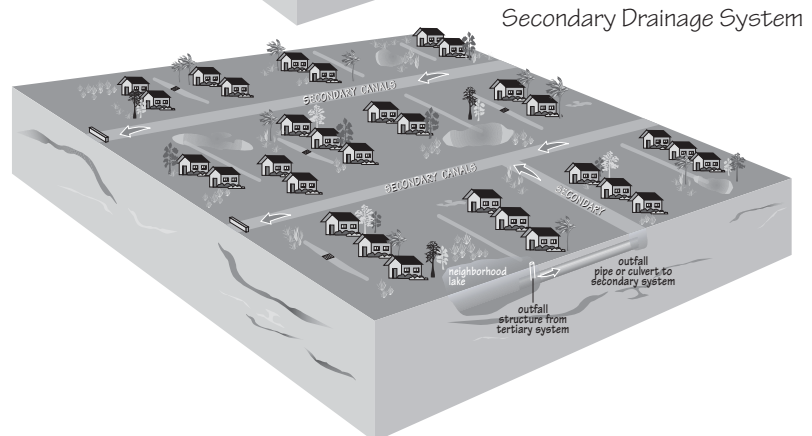
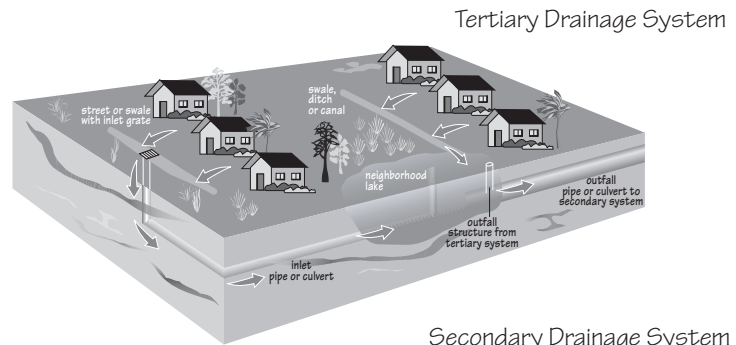
Permitting for some right-of-way uses is required, and structures must be built according to specifications.

## How You Can Help?

Know your canal. Do you live on a District primary canal or a secondary canal that is maintained by a municipality or drainage district? District canals are numbered with the prefix "C", "L" or in a few cases a "G" followed by a number, such as C-12, L-47, C-51, G-15, etc. If you are considering placing a structure or planting trees behind your house, be sure to determine where your property line is. If you will be encroaching on a canal maintenance right-of-way, you must obtain prior approvals from the District or other agency that has jurisdiction.

For District primary canals, you can call our main office at 561-686-8800 (toll free 1-800-432-2045) and ask for our Right-of-Way Division. Someone there can help you with your questions and determine whether a permit is needed.

Also, you can report violations or potential obstructions sighted. By protecting the right-of-way, you, your neighbors, and the community can benefit by avoiding unnecessary flooding in your local area or specific region. Let's all pitch in to help our flood control mission!



*Drainage is through a three-tier system managed by separate entities – know your canal and who manages it!*

To view the SFWMD Facility and Infrastructure Map showing the canal system, look at:  
[https://my.sfwmd.gov/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/Common/PDF/FACILITY\\_MAP\\_OVERVIEW.PDF](https://my.sfwmd.gov/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/Common/PDF/FACILITY_MAP_OVERVIEW.PDF) and  
[https://my.sfwmd.gov/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/Common/PDF/FACILITY\\_MAP\\_INSETS.PDF](https://my.sfwmd.gov/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/Common/PDF/FACILITY_MAP_INSETS.PDF)

To learn how storm water flows look at:  
[https://my.sfwmd.gov/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/Common/PDF/KNOW\\_THE\\_FLOW.PDF](https://my.sfwmd.gov/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/Common/PDF/KNOW_THE_FLOW.PDF)



JR05/28/09

**sfwmd.gov**

**South Florida Water Management District**  
 3301 Gun Club Road  
 West Palm Beach, Florida 33406  
 561-686-8800 • 800-432-2045  
[www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov)

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 24680  
 West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

## SERVICE CENTERS

Big Cypress Basin/Naples  
 239-263-7615  
 Broward  
 954-713-3200  
 Florida Keys (Key Largo)  
 305-853-3219  
 Lower West Coast  
 239-338-2929 or 800-248-1201

Martin/St. Lucie  
 772-223-2600 or 800-250-4100  
 Miami-Dade  
 305-377-7274 or 800-250-4300  
 Okeechobee  
 863-462-5260 or 800-250-4200  
 Orlando  
 407-858-6100 or 800-250-4250  
 Palm Beach County  
 561-682-6000 or 800-432-2045